

# **Benjamin Franklin**

## **A Register of His Papers in the Library of Congress**

**Prepared by Division Staff  
Revised and expanded by Donna Ellis**



**Manuscript Division, Library of Congress**

**Washington, D.C.**

**2000**

Contact information: <http://lcweb.loc.gov/rr/mss/address.html>

**Finding aid encoded by Library of Congress  
Manuscript Division, 2003**

Finding aid URL: <http://hdl.loc.gov/loc.mss/eadmss.ms003048>

Latest revision: 2004-07-23

## Collection Summary

**Title:** Papers of Benjamin Franklin

**Span Dates:** 1726-1907

**Bulk Dates:** (bulk 1770-1789)

**ID No.:** MSS21451

**Creator:** Franklin, Benjamin, 1706-1790

**Extent:** 8,000 items; 40 containers; 12 linear feet; 12 microfilm reels

**Language:** Collection material in English

**Repository:** Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

**Abstract:** Statesman, publisher, scientist, and diplomat. Correspondence, journals, records, articles, and other material relating to Franklin's life and career. Includes manuscripts (1728) of his Articles of Belief and Acts of Religion; negotiations in London (1775); letterbooks (1779-1782) of the U.S. legation in Paris; records (1780-1783) of the U.S. peace commissioners, including journals kept by Franklin and Richard Oswald; and papers (1781-1818) of Franklin's grandson, William Temple Franklin (1760-1823).

## Selected Search Terms

The following terms have been used to index the description of this collection in the Library's online catalog. They are grouped by name of person or organization, by subject or location, and by occupation and listed alphabetically therein.

### Names:

Franklin, Benjamin, 1706-1790

Adams, John, 1735-1826--Correspondence

Bache, Richard, 1737-1811--Correspondence

Carmichael, William, d. 1795--Correspondence

Cushing, Thomas, 1725-1788--Correspondence

Dumas, Charles Guillaume Frédéric, ca. 1725-1780--Correspondence.

Hartley, David, ca. 1731-1813--Correspondence

Hewson, M. S. (Mary Stevenson)--Correspondence

Ingenhousz, Jan, 1730-1799--Correspondence

Jay, John, 1745-1829--Correspondence

Jones, John Paul, 1747-1792--Correspondence

Lafayette, Marie Joseph Paul Yves Roch Gilbert Du Motier, marquis de, 1757-1834--Correspondence

Lansdowne, William Petty, Marquis of, 1737-1805--Correspondence

Laurens, Henry, 1724-1792--Correspondence

Morris, Robert, 1734-1806--Correspondence

Sartine, Antoine de, comte d'Alby, 1729-1801--Correspondence.

Vergennes, Charles Gravier, comte de, 1719-1787--Correspondence.

Washington, George, 1732-1799--Correspondence

Whitefield, George, 1714-1770--Correspondence

Williams, Jonathan, 1750-1815--Correspondence

Great Britain. Treaties, etc. United States, 1783 Sept. 3

United States. Continental Congress

United States. Postmaster General

Franklin, Benjamin, 1706-1790. Articles of belief and acts of religion (1728)

Franklin, William Temple, 1760-1823. Papers of William Temple Franklin

Oswald, Richard, 1705-1784 Papers of Richard Oswald

United States. Legation (France) Letterbooks of the U.S. Legation, France (1779-1782)

### Subjects:

Diplomatic and consular service, American--France

Postal service--United States

France--Foreign relations--United States

Great Britain--Foreign relations--United States

United States--Foreign relations--1775-1783  
United States--Foreign relations--France  
United States--Foreign relations--Great Britain  
United States--History--Revolution, 1775-1783  
United States--History--Revolution, 1775-1783--Peace

**Occupations:**

Diplomats  
Publishers  
Scientists  
Statesmen

## Administrative Information

**Provenance:**

The papers of Benjamin Franklin, statesman, publisher, scientist, and diplomat, were given to the Library of Congress by transfer, gift, and purchase, 1903-1968. An addition was transferred from the Library of Congress archives to the collection in 1989.

**Processing History:**

The papers of Benjamin Franklin were arranged and described in 1968 and prepared for microfilming in 1972. The papers have been described in *Benjamin Franklin, A Register and Index of His Papers in the Library of Congress* (Manuscript Division Reference Department: Library of Congress, Washington, D.C. 1973) and in the Library's publication *List of the Benjamin Franklin Papers in the Library of Congress* compiled in 1905 by Worthington C. Ford.

**Copyright Status:**

The status of copyright in the unpublished writings of Benjamin Franklin is governed by the Copyright Law of the United States (Title 17, U.S.C.).

**Microfilm:**

A microfilm edition of part of these papers is available on twelve reels. Consult a reference librarian in the Manuscript Division concerning availability for purchase or interlibrary loan.

**Preferred Citation:**

Researchers wishing to cite this collection should include the following information: Container or reel number, Benjamin Franklin Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

## Biographical Note

<i>Date</i>	<i>Event</i>
1706, Jan. 17	Born, Boston, Mass.
1718-1723	Apprenticed as a printer to his brother James Franklin
1725-1726	Journeyman printer, London, England
1727	Founded the Junta, a debating club, Philadelphia, Pa.
1728	Wrote <i>Articles of Belief and Acts of Religion</i>
1729	Purchased <i>Pennsylvania Gazette</i>

1730	Married Deborah Read Rogers (died 1774)
1731	Established the Library Company of Philadelphia, Pa.
1732-1758	Published <i>Poor Richard</i> , 1732-1747, and <i>Poor Richard Improved</i> , 1748-1758, commonly known under collective title <i>Poor Richard's Almanack</i>
1736-1751	Clerk, Pennsylvania Assembly
1740	Invented the Pennsylvania fireplace (Franklin stove)
1743	Proposed formation of the American Philosophical Society
1751	Founded with others, the Academy for Education of Youth (now University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, Pa.) Founded Philadelphia City Hospital, Philadelphia, Pa. Published letters to Peter Collinson, <i>Experiments and Observations on Electricity</i> . London: Printed and Sold by E. Cave
1751-1764	Represented Philadelphia at the Pennsylvania Assembly
1754	Represented Pennsylvania at the Albany Congress
1757-1762	Political agent of the Pennsylvania Assembly, London, England
1766	Reappointed as agent for Pennsylvania, London, England
1771	Began autobiography
1775	Left London, England, for Massachusetts Elected member of the Second Continental Congress Named postmaster general
1776	Served on committee to draft the Declaration of Independence Went to France as one of three American commissioners to negotiate a treaty
1778	Negotiated treaties of commerce and defense with France Appointed sole plenipotentiary in France
1781	Appointed with John Jay and John Adams to negotiate a peace with Great Britain
1783	Signed Treaty of Paris with Great Britain and asked Congress for his recall
1785	Returned to the United States
1785-1788	President, Supreme Executive Council of Pennsylvania
1787	Represented Pennsylvania at the Constitutional Convention
1790	Signed memorial to Congress as last official act as president of the Pennsylvania Society for Promoting the Abolition of Slavery

## Scope and Content Note

The papers of Benjamin Franklin (1706-1790) span the years 1726 to 1907, with the bulk of the material concentrated in the period 1770-1789. Consisting of correspondence, journals, records, articles, and other material, the collection reflects Franklin's many interests and activities.

[Series I](#) relates chiefly to Franklin's mission to France to obtain diplomatic recognition of the rebellious colonies as well as financial and military aid and to participate in the peace negotiations in Paris and London preceding the Treaty of Paris in 1783. The series contains seventeen interrelated volumes chiefly pertaining to Franklin's years in France. Six are letterbooks of the United States legation in Paris, 1779-1782. Other volumes include letters in French to Franklin, 1777-1780; records of the peace commissioners, 1780-1783; negotiations in London, 1775 (original and Franklin's corrected transcript); and Franklin's correspondence with David Hartley, 1775-1781. Single volumes include the Craven Street, London, letterbook, 1772-1773, one of the few pre-Revolutionary Franklin letterbooks to survive; the signed Petition of the First Continental Congress to the King, 16 October 1774; and Richard Oswald's journal concerning the peace commission, 1782.

[Series II](#) has been described in the Library's publication *List of the Benjamin Franklin Papers in the Library of Congress* compiled in 1905 by Worthington C. Ford. Of the fourteen volumes in this series, eleven represent a selection of Franklin's correspondence, 1726-1790 made by William Temple Franklin prior to his departure for London in 1791. The letters bear many editorial annotations, deletions, and other changes made by William Temple Franklin before publication of his three-volume work. This series also contains a volume of notes entitled "Medical, Nature Printing and Addenda" and two volumes of William Temple Franklin's papers.

[Series III](#) represents a miscellaneous group of Benjamin Franklin items gathered by the Library. It includes the original manuscript of Franklin's *Articles of Belief and Acts of Religion*; his correspondence with M. S. Hewson, 1760-1779; a facsimile copy of his ledger as postmaster general, 1775-1778; his correspondence with Jan Ingenhousz, 1777-1785; and other papers, 1728-1841 and undated.

[Series IV](#) includes copies of items held by other institutions and transcripts of material from Series I and II which is not on the microfilm of the Library's Benjamin Franklin Papers.

The [Addition](#) consists of a letter, 1753, from Franklin to George Whitefield concerning the importance of "good works" in the Christian faith. The letter written in an unknown hand is a print made from a microfilm in the American Philosophical Society Library, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

## Related Material

Franklin correspondence can also be found in other collections in the Manuscript Division of the Library, including the Peter Force Collection and the papers of George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, Edmond Charles Genet, James McHenry, Silas Deane, and Andrew Ellicott. Other Franklin items in the Library are in the Mrs. Archibald Crossley Autograph Collection, the J. Pierpont Morgan Book of Signers, the Gaston Tissandier Collection, and the reproductions from archives in Great Britain (Public Record Office) and France (Ministère des Affaires Étrangères).

## Organization of the Papers

The collection is arranged in five series:

- [Series I, 1772-1783](#)
- [Series II, 1726-1818, n.d.](#)
- [Series III, 1728-1841, n.d.](#)
- [Series IV, 1744-1907, n.d.](#)
- [Addition, 1753](#)

## Description of Series

### *Container*

BOX 1-16

REEL 1-4

### *Series*

#### **Series I, 1772-1783**

Letterbooks, journals, records of negotiations, a petition, and correspondence.

Indexed by name of writer or recipient.

BOX 17-30

REEL 5-12

#### **Series II, 1726-1818, n.d.**

General correspondence and miscellaneous papers of Benjamin Franklin and correspondence and other papers of William Temple Franklin.

Indexed by name of writer or recipient.

BOX 31-32

REEL 12

#### **Series III, 1728-1841, n.d.**

Literary and scientific articles, memoranda, correspondence of Benjamin Franklin and William Temple Franklin, and miscellany.

Arranged chronologically and indexed by name of writer and recipient.

BOX 33-39

not filmed

#### **Series IV, 1744-1907, n.d.**

Copies of correspondence and miscellaneous material from collections outside the Library of Congress.

Arranged chronologically and indexed by name of writer and recipient. Transcripts of material from Series I and II are unarranged and unindexed.

BOX 39

#### **Addition, 1753**

Copy of a letter from Franklin to George Whitefield.

# Container List

<i>Container</i>	<i>Contents</i>
<b>BOX 1-16</b> <b>REEL 1-4</b>	<b>Series I, 1772-1783</b>  Letterbooks, journals, records of negotiations, a petition, and correspondence. Indexed by name of writer or recipient.
<b>BOX 1</b> <b>REEL 1</b>	Records of the United States legation, Paris, France  Letters in French to Franklin, 1777-1780 (1 vol.)
<b>BOX 2</b> <b>REEL 1</b>	Letterbooks  1779 (1 vol.)
<b>BOX 3</b> <b>REEL 1</b>	1779-1780  (1 vol.)
<b>BOX 4</b> <b>REEL 1</b>	1780  (1 vol.)
<b>BOX 5</b> <b>REEL 2</b>	1781  (1 vol.)
<b>BOX 6</b> <b>REEL 2</b>	(1 vol.)
<b>BOX 7</b> <b>REEL 2</b>	1782  (1 vol.)
<b>BOX 8</b> <b>REEL 2</b>	Peace commissioners  1780-1783 (1 vol.)
<b>BOX 8a</b> <b>REEL 2</b>	(1 vol.)
<b>BOX 9</b> <b>REEL 2</b>	Commissioners to France, 1776-1779  (1 vol.)
<b>BOX 10</b> <b>REEL 3</b>	Petition of the Continental Congress to the King, Philadelphia, Pa., 1774, Oct. 26  (1 vol.)
<b>BOX 11</b> <b>REEL 3</b>	Craven Street letterbook, London, England, 1772-1773  (1 vol.)
<b>BOX 12</b> <b>REEL 3</b>	Oswald, Richard, journal, peace commission, 1782  (1 vol.)

## Series I, 1772-1783

### *Container*

### *Contents*

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BOX 13 REEL 4	Franklin's journal, peace commission, 1782  (1 vol.)
BOX 14 REEL 4	Negotiations in London, England, 1775  Original autograph (1 vol.)
BOX 15 REEL 4	Transcript corrected by Franklin  (1 vol.)
BOX 16 REEL 4	Correspondence with David Hartley, 1775-1781  (1 vol.)
BOX 17-30 REEL 5-12	<b>Series II, 1726-1818, n.d.</b>  General correspondence and miscellaneous papers of Benjamin Franklin and correspondence and other papers of William Temple Franklin. Indexed by name of writer or recipient.
BOX 17 REEL 5	1726, July 22-1774, May 21  (1 vol.)
BOX 18 REEL 5-6	1774, June 10-1778, Oct. 9  (1 vol.)
BOX 19 REEL 6	1778, Oct. 20-1781, May 1  (1 vol.)
BOX 20 REEL 7	1781, May 4-1782, Jan.  (1 vol.)
BOX 21 REEL 7	1782, Jan.-1784, Jan. 6  (1 vol.)
BOX 22 REEL 8	1784, Jan. 12-1785, May 23  (1 vol.)
BOX 23 REEL 8	1785, May 26-1786, Dec. 10  (1 vol.)
BOX 24 REEL 9	1786, Dec. 15-1789, Mar. 2  (1 vol.)
BOX 25 REEL 9	1789, Apr.-1790, n.d.  (1 vol.)
BOX 26 REEL 10	Undated  (1 vol.)

**Series II, 1726-1818, n.d.**

**Container**

**Contents**

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**BOX 27**  
**REEL 10**

Miscellaneous material in French, 1778-1786, n.d.

(1 vol.)

**BOX 28**  
**REEL 10**

Medical, Nature Printing and Addenda, 1781-1785, n.d.

(1 vol.)

**BOX 29**  
**REEL 11**

Franklin, William Temple, papers

Correspondence, 1781-1818, n.d.

(1 vol.)

**BOX 30**  
**REEL 11-12**

Correspondence and miscellaneous material, 1814-1818, n.d.

(1 vol.)

**BOX 31-32**  
**REEL 12**

**Series III, 1728-1841, n.d.**

Literary and scientific articles, memoranda, correspondence of Benjamin Franklin and William Temple Franklin, and miscellany.

Arranged chronologically and indexed by name of writer and recipient.

**BOX 31**  
**REEL 12**

Miscellaneous material

1728-1783

**BOX 32**  
**REEL 12**

1784-1841, n.d.

**BOX 33-39**  
not filmed

**Series IV, 1744-1907, n.d.**

Copies of correspondence and miscellaneous material from collections outside the Library of Congress.

Arranged chronologically and indexed by name of writer and recipient. Transcripts of material from Series I and II are unarranged and unindexed.

**BOX 33**

Reproduction and miscellaneous material

1744-1775

**BOX 34**

1776-1907, n.d.

**BOX 35-39**

Unarranged transcripts

**BOX 39**

**Addition, 1753**

Copy of a letter from Franklin to George Whitefield.

**BOX 39**

Letter (copy), Benjamin Franklin to George Whitefield, 1753